

(Rev. 8-86)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION FORM

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**1. Name of Property**

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historic name: Angelus Temple

other name/site number: N/A

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**2. Location**

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street & number: 1100 Glendale Boulevard.

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Los Angeles

vicinity: N/A

state: CA county: Los Angeles code: 037

zip code: 90026

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**3. Classification**

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Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this \_\_\_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation \_\_\_\_\_ standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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**5. National Park Service Certification**

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

\_\_\_\_\_ entered in the National Register \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_ determined eligible for the \_\_\_\_\_

National Register \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the \_\_\_\_\_

National Register \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ removed from the National Register \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date  
of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic: religion

Sub: religious structure

Current: religion

Sub: religious structure

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification:

Modern Movement

Other Description: N/A

Materials: foundation: concrete      roof: concrete  
                 walls: concrete              other: steel frame

Describe present and historic physical appearance.   X   See continuation sheet.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: national

Applicable National Register Criteria: B, A  
National Historic Landmark Criteria: 1, 2

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A  
National Historic Landmark Criteria Exception: 1  
Areas of Significance: religion  
                                 social history

NHL Theme: XXX. American Ways of Life

Period(s) of Significance: 1923-1944

Significant Dates: N/A

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Significant Person(s): McPherson, Aimee Semple

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Hawkins, Brook

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

☒ See continuation sheet.

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**☒ See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- ☐ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other -- Specify Repository: Church of the Foursquare Gospel Archives

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**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property: less than one

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing

A	11	383750	3771140	B	_____	_____	_____
C	_____	_____	_____	D	_____	_____	_____

\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

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Verbal Boundary Description: \_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

The nominated property is located on lots 49 and 50 in block "0" of the Montana Tract, Los Angeles, California.

Boundary Justification: \_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

The boundaries are those that have historically been associated with the Angelus Temple.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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Name/Title: Dr. Page Putnam Miller, Director  
Jill S. Topolski  
Vernon Horn

Organization: National Coordinating Committee  
for the Promotion of History

Date: November 13, 1991

Street & Number: 400 A Street, SE

Telephone: (202) 544-2422

City or Town: Washington

State: DC

Zip Code: 20003

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DESCRIPTION OF SITE:

The Angelus Temple, designed by Brook Hawkins, was completed in 1923. The Class "A" fireproof building was constructed of concrete and steel. The main architectural feature of the structure is its large, unsupported concrete dome coated with a mixture of ground abalone shells. The dome, the largest in North America, rises 125 feet from the main floor. A large revolving neon cross is mounted on the exterior of the dome. Beneath the dome on the interior of the building is the main auditorium, a large room with two balconies that seats 5,300. Originally, its ceiling was decorated with a panorama of clouds painted by artist Anna Henneke. All of the aisles on the main floor lead to the altar.

The interior of the auditorium has a 40-foot mural located above a golden topped proscenium arch. There are also eight stained glass windows made by artist George Haskins depicting the entire life of Christ. A custom made Kimball organ sits in its own pit. Above the stage a 30 foot facade of the organ spans the entire wall accented by a painting of Christ with one hand pointing to heaven and the other towards the pulpit. The furnishings are all original, and consist of a pulpit, carved pulpit chairs, velour platform curtains and a sign that says "Jesus Christ the same Yesterday, Today and Forever." Originally, the choir loft was located immediately above the platform, but in 1929, the Angelus Temple was remodeled to form a proscenium arch and a large stage. This made necessary a change in the ramps, and the organ was moved from the side to the center of the orchestra pit where it could be elevated eight feet by a hydraulic lift. Two choir lofts seating 180 flank each side of the platform. Further renovations occurred in 1972 when the building was refurbished and seating capacity was reduced. The doors were replaced and the organ was once again moved to the side of the platform. The cloud panorama on the inside of the dome was removed. Nevertheless the Angelus Temple, both on the exterior and the interior, recalls the time of Aimee Semple McPherson. Murals and stained glass windows along with the configuration of the room and the interior furnishings are the same as when Aimee Semple McPherson preached in the Angelus Temple auditorium.

The second floor of the building contains offices and other rooms related to the function of the Temple. Originally, the Rose Corridor offered the membership books to the members of the Foursquare Gospel on Sundays so that they could review the record of their individual contributions. Other rooms include the Costume Studio, the Flower Room where volunteers make holiday decorations, and the Construction Room where biblical scenes are created.

The building also houses a smaller auditorium called the Hundred and Twenty Room, The Five Hundred Room, where the ill receive religious instruction regarding healing, and an encasement containing evidence of past illnesses healed by faith.

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Also part of the Angelus Temple is a Prayer Tower where men and women answer the prayer requests of those far away. The Council Chamber and the Temple Office are located on the first floor of the building, with the administrative offices located on the third floor.

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HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The Angelus Temple, located on Glendale Boulevard in Los Angeles, California is historically significant as the base of operations for Aimee Semple McPherson, a pioneer in the field of radio evangelism. McPherson set a number of important precedents for women in religion in the early part of the 20th century. She was the first woman to receive an FCC radio license and she was a pioneer religious broadcaster. In her sermons on radio KSFG and her preaching at the Angelus Temple, McPherson was the first to incorporate Hollywood and vaudeville style entertainment techniques. In addition, she mobilized an extensive social ministry from her headquarters at the Angelus Temple. She provided a social and educational center for thousands of Midwestern migrants. During the Great Depression she provided hot meals for thousands of hungry people. In the context of the total social and intellectual history of the United States, much credit should be given to this flamboyant, "celebrated and controversial" woman. By widening the appeal of pentecostalism to millions more Americans, McPherson "marked a turning point in the history of the pentecostal movement in the United States."<sup>1</sup> According to the National Park Service Thematic Framework, the Angelus Temple falls under theme XXX. American Ways of Life.

Aimee Kennedy Semple McPherson was born in 1890 and raised in rural Ingersoll, Canada. After an early marriage to Robert Semple she traveled to China as a Pentecostal missionary. In 1909, a year after her arrival in China, Robert Semple died and Aimee came to New York. Shortly thereafter she married Harold McPherson and moved to Providence, Rhode Island. The McPherson's soon began to conduct independent, itinerant evangelistic campaigns throughout the eastern seaboard of the country, but their marriage lasted only a brief time. In 1916 Aimee McPherson then continued the ministry that had begun with only a tent and an old car. During this period she did not have any permanent residence.

Finally in 1918 Aimee Semple McPherson and her two children settled in Los Angeles, California. Within a few months of her arrival she moved into a bungalow on Orange Grove Drive. Later, when the Foursquare Gospel Church was established, she moved into a parsonage near the Angelus Temple, which remained her primary residence until 1944. The property that is most closely associated with McPherson is the Angelus Temple at 1100 Glendale Boulevard. Completed and paid for only three years after her arrival in California, the Angelus Temple was the base of all of her considerable social, humanitarian and religious activities. From the Angelus Temple millions of people received food and other humanitarian relief in the midst of the Great Depression. It is the place where tens of thousands of people heard and saw her preach. Therefore it is the most appropriate site for designation.

Aimee Kennedy Semple McPherson was born to deeply religious parents. Aimee's mother was a dedicated member of the Salvation Army; her father was a Methodist choir



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leader. Aimee's more aggressive mother took charge of her religious upbringing and dedicated Aimee to God's service in the Salvation Army. At an early age, she developed her self-assurance in public by singing, praying and reciting scripture every Sunday in the Salvation Army services. As the only Salvationist in her public school, the other children were quick to taunt her. Turning enemies into friends, Aimee, with a makeshift drum, soon had them parading around the school yard behind her, Salvation Army style.<sup>2</sup>

Later in high school Aimee was confronted with scientific theories of evolution and began to doubt her faith as she had learned it. After an unsettling period of wonder and searching she began attending a local Pentecostal church whose emphasis on emotional experience attracted her. This church was a part of a religious movement that began in the first decade of the twentieth century and was characterized by revivalistic practices and charismatic leaders.

Shortly after her conversion, Aimee fell in love with and married a young Pentecostal minister, Robert Semple. Aimee Semple began touring the U.S. and Canada with her husband who held revival services. During this time she thoroughly learned Pentecostal doctrines, the practice of faith healing, and speaking and interpreting the gift of tongues. Eventually the couple felt called to go to China as missionaries. Shortly after their arrival in China they both fell ill and Robert Semple died.

After the birth of her first child one month after her husband's death, Aimee Semple left China to meet her mother in New York. The next six years of her life were ones of despair and "backsliding." Marrying Harold McPherson, she attempted to start over. Being the wife of a grocer in Providence, Rhode Island, however, did not fulfill her. During a period of prolonged illness she focused on the meaning of religion in her life. In 1916, leaving her husband, and with little more than her faith, she set out on her own cross country revival tour. Between 1916 and 1923 she spent most of her time preaching throughout the country.

In 1918 Aimee Semple McPherson established a base of operations in Los Angeles, California. From 1918 to 1923 she continued to tour the country, but now she worked to raise money for the Angelus Temple project in California. By 1923 her revival ministry had built and paid for the Angelus Temple at 1100 Glendale Boulevard. The Angelus Temple, half church and half theater, came to be the center of her revival, healing and benevolent ministries. After the Angelus Temple's completion Aimee McPherson spent much of her time in California, but frequently found time to conduct traveling crusades. Her crusades came to rival those held by Billy Sunday and the more recent Billy Graham. On one 150-day tour it is estimated that she traveled 15,000 miles and delivered 336 sermons to audiences totaling more than two million people, and reached millions more over 45 radio stations.

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Aimee Semple McPherson's career peaked during "the great fundamentalist-modernist scism in Protestantism which split every denomination into violently partisan wings."<sup>3</sup> McPherson fell squarely into the fundamentalist camp. She participated in the transformation of American Christianity, calling the faithful to abandon the old denominations that she believed had become tainted with Darwinian modernism.<sup>4</sup>

In Aimee McPherson's battle for the Gospel she reached out to anyone who would listen. In Winnipeg she prayed with prostitutes. In Florida she held special crusades for blacks because "the dear colored people did not feel free to attend the white meetings." While in Oakland, California she preached to the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>5</sup>

The Angelus Temple, her base of operations after 1918, became much more than an ordinary church. It became a focal point of social, charitable, and religious functions. Due to heavy immigration, Los Angeles had gained a reputation as "one-hundred midwest towns laid end-to-end."<sup>6</sup> In the land of the second chance, McPherson found a place for one and all in the ministries of the Angelus Temple. As social historian William McLoughlin said:

[McPherson] organized committees which sent men and women out all over the state to pray and sing and bear gifts to the needy in hospitals, poor houses, rest homes, orphanages, jails, houses of correction, and slum sections of the cities. She utilized all available talent in her choirs, quartets, glee clubs, orchestra, brass bands (with silver instruments), scenic designers, and dramatic artists for her dramatized sermons and religious operas. She had a free employment bureau, a Lonely Club and a parole committee. . . .

Another major facet of Aimee Semple McPherson's social ministry was the commissary. Even before the Great Depression, she directed members to bring some item to stock the shelves every week. The Angelus Temple staff freely distributed items to anyone in need. When the Great Depression hit, the Angelus Temple expanded its services and provided over 1,500,000 meals to those in need.<sup>8</sup>

McPherson's gospel differed from several of the major components of the social Gospel which favored liberal political reform. She believed and fervently preached (sometimes as much as five times a day) an evangelical gospel of the need for spiritual repentance and personal reform. Yet she did not attempt to scare her audience. She did not dwell on punishment, but promoted a positive thinking approach to theology and life.<sup>9</sup> Though often she preached against the Jazz Age, she pioneered the use of vaudeville and Hollywood theatrics to attract and hold the attention of her audience. These attention getters, however, were intended to illustrate the sermon. When McPherson dressed as a policewoman and rode a motorcycle onto the stage

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she preached on the subject "Stop! You are breaking God's law!"<sup>10</sup> As her career progressed she put less emphasis on speaking in tongues and faith healing that had been responsible for much of her early success. Instead McPherson worked for respectability through less boisterous services and more attention to soul winning.<sup>11</sup>

Aimee Semple McPherson's movement, however, was much more than a cult of personality. She summarized her doctrines into four major points conveniently known as the "Foursquare Gospel" and, though they did not differ very much from a traditional pietistic faith, she published them in a book of the same name.<sup>12</sup> In 1926 she established a Bible College, "Lighthouse of Foursquare Evangelism" to train ministers, missionaries and evangelists. By 1944 there were more than 3,000 graduates. Many of these graduates, both men and women, became ministers in Foursquare Gospel Churches around the country or missionaries around the world. Presently the denomination continues and "has grown steadily in size, wealth and respectability until today it ranks as one of the three or four most distinguished branches of "the Pentecostal or Holiness churches."<sup>13</sup>

Today the Foursquare Gospel denomination is still growing with more than 1,440 in the United States and Canada and over 21,000 churches worldwide. There are currently over 1.5 million members in 70 countries across the globe. Aimee Semple McPherson pioneered the use of radio. Many of her techniques are still employed by modern evangelists. Even after her death, Aimee McPherson's message continues to go out over numerous radio and television stations.<sup>16</sup>

Aimee Semple McPherson helped keep alive the pietistic tradition, and breathed the life of Pentecostalism into it. Not only is the Foursquare Gospel denomination still in existence, but it has served as a model for many modern Pentecostal evangelists, many of whom also maintain similar social and humanitarian aid ministries. Despite the colorful nature of her ministry she was genuinely motivated by a desire to serve God. Over the course of her career she assisted millions of the immigrants that flooded the region. Her aid was more than just material, though there was much of that; she also helped immigrants build community structures in their new home. Her work significantly influenced the unique California cultural tradition. In addition, her work is an important contribution to the American tradition of charity through self help and positive thinking. Though she was sometimes extravagant and flamboyant, her ministry was never racked by financial scandal. Aimee Semple McPherson proclaimed herself to be "everybody's sister" and truly she was a woman of the people.

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<sup>1</sup> Vinson Synan, The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1971), 200. McPherson has been characterized as "one of the most highly publicized religious figures of the era" by George Marsden in his Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism, (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1991), 60. McPherson's effect on the national pentecostal movement was to add national "interest and toleration to a religion that had been considered of interest only to the lowest levels of society," Synan 200. See also Synan 190-191, 197.

<sup>2</sup>William G. McLoughlin, "Aimee Semple McPherson: 'Your Sister in the King's Glad Service,'" *Journal of Popular Culture*, 1 (Winter 1967): 194-217.

3. McLoughlin, "Aimee Semple McPherson", 203.

4 Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 204-205.

<sup>6</sup>David L. Clark, "Miracles for a Dime," California History, 57 (Winter 1978-1979), 360.

7 McLoughlin, "Aimee Semple McPherson", 201.

<sup>8</sup>Clark, "Miracles for a Dime", 362.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 351.

<sup>10</sup> Lately Thomas, *Storming Heaven: The Lives and Turmoils of Minnie Kennedy and Aimee Semple McPherson*, (New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1970), 32.

McLoughlin, "Aimee Semple McPherson," 205.

<sup>12</sup>Aimee Semple McPherson, The Foursquare Gospel, (Los Angeles: Echo Park Evangelistic Association, 1946), *passim*.

<sup>13</sup> McLoughlin, "Aimee Semple McPherson," 215; Gloria Ricci Lothrop, "West of Eden: Pioneer Media Evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson in Los Angeles," Journal of the West 28 (April 1988): 50.

14 Rolf K. McPherson to Jill Topolski, 11 December, 1990.

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Thomas, Lately. Storming Heaven: The Lives and Turmoils of Minnie Kennedy and Aimee Semple McPherson. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1970.